

The PRINCE of GRAUSTARK

Continued from page 5

"I am from New York."

"By the way, do you happen to know a Miss Blithers—Maud Blithers?"

Miss Guile frowned reflectively. "Blithers? The name is a familiar one. Maud Blithers? What is she like?"

"She's supposed to be very good looking. I've never seen her."

"How queer to be asking me if I know her, then. Why do you ask?"

"I've heard so much about her lately. She is the daughter of William Blithers, the great capitalist."

"Oh, I know who he is," she exclaimed. "Perfect ruddies of money, hasn't he?"

"Ruddies?"

"Loads, if it means more to you. I forgot that you are a foreigner. He gave that wonderful ball last week for the Prince of—of—oh, some insignificant place over in Europe. There are such a lot of queer duchies and principalities, don't you know? It is quite impossible to tell one from the other. They don't even appear on the maps."

He took it with a perfectly straight face, though secretly annoyed. "It was the talk of the town, that ball. It must have cost ruddies of money. Is that right?"

"Yes, but it doesn't sound right when you say it. Naturally one doesn't say ruddies in Vienna."

"We say ruddies," said he. "I am very fond of them. But to resume. I supposed every one in New York knew Miss Blithers. She's quite the rage, I'm told."

"Indeed? I should think she might be," Mr. Schmidt, with all those lovely ruddies behind her.

He smiled introspectively. "Yes, and I am told that in spite of them she is the prettiest girl in New York."

She appeared to lose interest in the topic. "Oh, indeed?"

"But," he supplemented gracefully, "it isn't true."

"What isn't true?"

"The statement that she is the prettiest girl in New York."

"How can you say that when you admit you've never seen her?"

"I can say it with a perfectly clear conscience, Miss Guile," said he and was filled with delight when she bit her lip as a sign of acknowledgment.

"Oh, here comes the tea!" she cried, with a strange eagerness in her voice.

"I am so glad," she scrambled gracefully out of her rug and arose to her feet.

"Aren't you going to have some?" he cried.

"Yes," she said quite pointedly. "In my room, Mr. Schmidt." And before he could get to his feet she was moving away without so much as a nod or smile for him.

The following day was as unlike its predecessor as black is like white. During the night the smooth gray pond had been transformed into a turbulent, storm thrashed ocean. Only the hardest of the passengers ventured on deck.

R. Schmidt, being a good sailor and a hardy young chap, albeit a prince of royal blood, was abroad early. He took two turns about the deck, and each time as he passed the spot he sent a covert glance into the corner where Miss Guile's chair was standing. Of course he did not expect to find her there in weather like this, but—well, he looked, and that is the end to the argument.

Quinn and Dank were hopelessly bedridden, so to speak. They were very disagreeable, cross and unpleasant, and somehow he felt that they hated their cheerful, happy faced prince.

At last the young man battled his way down the deck and soon found himself in the well protected corner. A half dozen unoccupied chairs were cluttered about, having been abandoned by persons who overestimated their hardness. One of the stewards was engaged in stacking them up and making them fast.

Miss Guile's chair and that of Mrs. Gaston were stanchly fastened down and their rugs were in place. R. Schmidt experienced an exquisite sense of pleasure. Here was a perfect exemplification of that much abused thing known as circumstantial evidence. She contemplated coming on deck. So he had his chair put in place, called for his rug, shrugged his chin down into the collar of his thick ulster and sat down to wait.

She literally was blown into his presence. He sprang to his feet to check her swift approach before she could be dashed against the wall or upon the heap of chairs in the corner. She uttered an excited little shriek as she came bang up against him and found his ready arms closing about her shoulders.

"Oh, goodness!" she gasped, with what little breath she had left, and then began to laugh as she freed herself in confusion—a very pretty confusion, he recalled later on, after he had recovered to some extent from the effects of an exceedingly severe bump on the back of his head. "How awkward!"

"Not at all," he proclaimed, retaining a grip on one of her arms until the ship showed some signs of resuming its way eastward instead of downward.

"I am sure it must have hurt dreadfully," she cried. "Nothing hurts worse than a bump. It seemed as though you must have splintered the wall."

"I have a singularly hard head," said he, and forthwith felt of the back of it.

"Will you please stand ready to receive boarders? My maid is following me, poor thing, and I can't afford to have her smashed to pieces. Here she is!"

Quite a pretty maid, with wide, horrified eyes and a pale green complexion came bustling around the corner. R. Schmidt, albeit a prince, received her with open arms.

"Merci, m'sieur!" she squealed and added something in muffled French that strangely reminded him of what Hobbs had said in English. Then she deposited an armful of rugs and magazines at Robin's feet and clutched wildly at a post actually some ten feet away, but which appeared to be coming toward her with obliging swiftness, so nicely was the deck rotating for her. "Mon dieu! Mon dieu!"

"You may go back to bed, Marie," cried her mistress in some haste.

"But ze rug, I feex it," groaned the unhappy maid, and then once more, "Merci, m'sieur!" She clung to the arm he extended and tried bravely to smile her thanks.

"Here! Go in through this door," he said, bracing the door open with his elbow. "You'll be all right in a little while. Keep your nerve." He closed the door after her and turned to the amused Miss Guile. "Well, it's an ill wind that blows no good," he said enigmatically, and she flushed under the steady smile in his eyes. "Allow me to arrange your rug for you, Miss Guile."

"Thank you, no. I think I would better go inside. It is really too windy."

"The wind can't get at you back here in this cubbyhole," he protested. "Do sit down. I'll have you as snug as a bug in a rug before you can say Jack Robinson. See! Now stick 'em out and I'll wrap it around them. There! You're as neatly done up as a mummy and a good deal better off, because you are a long way short of being 2,000 years old."

"How is your head, Mr. Schmidt?" she inquired, with grave concern.

"You seem to be quite crazy. I hope—"

"Every one is a little bit mad, don't you think, especially in moments of great excitement. I daresay my head has been turned quite appreciably, and I'm glad that you've been kind enough to notice it. Where is Mrs. Gaston?" He was vastly exhilarated.

She regarded him with eyes that sparkled and belied the unamiable nature of her reply.

"The poor lady is where she is not at all likely to be annoyed, Mr. Schmidt."

Then she took up a magazine and coolly began to run through the pages. He waited for a moment, considerably dashed, and then said, "Oh, in a very unfriendly manner. She found her place in the magazine, assumed a more comfortable position and with noteworthy resolution set about reading as if her life depended upon it."

CHAPTER X.

A Prince's Heart at Stake.

THE prince sat down, pulled the rug up to his chin and stared out at the great, heaving billows. Suddenly remembering another injury, he felt once more of the back of his head.

"By jove!" he exclaimed. "There is a lump there."

"I can't hear you," she said, allowing the magazine to drop into her lap, but keeping her place carefully marked with one of her fingers.

"I can hear you perfectly," he said.

"It's the way the wind blows," she explained.

"Easily remedied," said he. "I'll move into Mrs. Gaston's chair if you think it will help any."

"Do!" she said promptly. "You will not disturb me in the least—unless you talk." She resumed her reading, half a page above the finger tip.

He moved over and arranged himself comfortably, snugly in Mrs. Gaston's chair. Their elbows almost met. He was prepared to be very patient. For a long time she continued to read, her warm, rosy cheek half averted, her eyes applied to their task with irritating constancy. He did not despair. Some wise person once had told him that it was only necessary to give a woman sufficient time and she would be the one to despair.

A few passengers possessed of proud sea legs staggered past the snug couple on their ridiculous rounds of the ship. If they thought of Miss Guile and R. Schmidt at all it was with the scorn that is usually devoted to youth at its very best. There could be no doubt in the passing mind that these two were sweethearts who managed to thrive on the smallest of comforts.

At last his patience was rewarded. She lowered the magazine and stifled a yawn—but not a real one.

"Have you read it?" she inquired composedly.

"A part of it," he said. "Over your shoulder."

"Is that considered polite in Vienna?"

"If you only knew what a bump I've got on the back of my head you wouldn't be so ungracious," he said.

"I couldn't possibly know, could I?"

He leaned forward and indicated the spot on the back of his head, first removing his cap. She laughed nervously, and then gently rubbed her fingers over the thick hair.

"There is a dreadful lump!" she exclaimed. "Oh, how sorry I am. Do—do you feel faint or—or—I mean, is it very painful?"

"Not now," he replied, replacing his cap and favoring her with his most engaging smile.

She smiled in response, betraying not the slightest sign of embarrassment.

"Am I to regard you as a hero?"

"If you will be so kind, please."

She laughed outright at this. "I think I rather like you, Mr. Schmidt," she said, with unexpected candor.

"Oh, I fancy I'm not at all bad," said he, after a momentary stare of astonishment. "I am especially good in rough weather," he went on, trying to forget that he was a prince of the royal blood, a rather difficult matter when one stops to consider he was not in the habit of hearing people say that they rather liked him.

"Do your friends come from Vienna?" she inquired abruptly.

"Yes," he said, and then saved his face as usual by adding under his breath, "but they don't live there." It was not in him to lie outright; hence the handy way of appeasing his conscience.

"They are very interesting looking men, especially the younger. I cannot remember when I have seen a more attractive man."

"He is a splendid chap," exclaimed Robin, with genuine enthusiasm. "I am very fond of Dank."

She was silent for a moment. Something had failed, and she was rather glad of it.

"Do you like New York?" she asked.

"Immensely. I met a great many delightful people there, Miss Guile. You say you do not know the Blithers family? Mr. Blithers is a rare old bird."

"Isn't there some talk of his daughter being engaged to the Prince of Graustark?"

He felt that his ears were red. "The newspapers hinted at something of the sort, I believe." He was suddenly possessed by the curious notion that he was being "pumped" by his fair companion. Indeed, a certain insistent note had crept into her voice, and her eyes were searching his with an intentness that had not appeared in them until now.

"Have you seen him?"

"The prince?"

"Yes. What is he like?"

"I've seen pictures of him," he equivocated. "Rather nice looking, I should say."

"Of course he is like all foreign noblemen and will leap at the Blithers millions if he gets the chance. I sometimes feel sorry for the poor wretches." There was more scorn than pity in the way she said it, however, and her velvety eyes were suddenly hard and uncompromising.

He longed to defend himself, in the third person, but could not do so for very strong and obvious reasons. He allowed himself the privilege, however, of declaring that foreign noblemen are not always as black as they are painted. And then, for a very excellent reason, he contrived to change the subject by asking where she was going on the continent.

"I may go to Vienna," she said, with a smile that served to puzzle rather than to delight him. He was more than ever convinced that she was playing with him. "But pray do not look so gloomy, Mr. Schmidt, I shall not make any demands upon your time while I am there. You may—"

"I am quite sure of that," he interrupted, with his ready smile. "You see, I am a person of no consequence in Vienna, while you— Ah, well, as an American girl you will be hobnobbing with the nobility while the humble Schmidt sits afar off and marvels at the kindness of a fate that befell him in the middle of the Atlantic ocean, and yet curses the fate that makes him unworthy of the slightest notice from the aforesaid American girl. For, I daresay, Miss Guile, you, like all American girls, are ready to leap at titles."

"That really isn't fair, Mr. Schmidt," she protested, flushing. "Why should you and I quarrel over a condition that cannot apply to either of us? You are not a nobleman, and I am not a title seeking American girl. So, why all this beautiful irony?"

"It only remains for me to humbly beg your pardon and to add that if you come to Vienna my every waking hour shall be devoted to the pleasure of—"

"I am sorry I mentioned it, Mr. Schmidt," she interrupted coldly. "You may rest easy, for I shall not keep you awake for a single hour. Besides, I may not go to Vienna at all."

"I am sure you would like Vienna," he said, somewhat chilled by her manner.

"I have been there with my parents, but it was a long time ago. I once saw the emperor, and often have I seen the wonderful Prince Liechtenstein."

"Have you traveled extensively in Europe?"

She was smiling once more. "I don't know what you would consider extensively," she said. "I was educated in Paris, I have spent innumerable winters in Rome and quite as many summers in Scotland, England, Switzerland, Germany—"

"I know who you are!" he cried out enthusiastically. To his amazement a startled expression leaped into her eyes. "You are traveling under an assumed name." She remained perfectly still, watching him with an anxious smile on her lips. "You are no other than Miss Baedeker, the well known authoress."

It seemed to him that she breathed deeply.

"In that case my pseudonym should be Guide, not Guile," she cried merrily. The dimples played in her cheeks, and her eyes were dancing.

"B. stands for Baedeker, I'm sure. Baedeker Guide. If the B. isn't for Baedeker, what is it for?"

"Are you asking what the B. really stands for, Mr. Schmidt?"

"In a roundabout way, Miss Guile," he admitted.

"My name is Bedella," she said, with absolute sincerity. "Me mither is Irish, d'ye see?"

"By jove, it's worth a lot of trouble to get you to smile like that," he cried admiringly. "It is the first really honest smile you've displayed. If you knew how it improves you you'd be doing it all of the time."

At this juncture the miserable Hobbs hove into sight, not figuratively, but literally. He came surging across the deck in a mad dash from one haven to another, or, more accurately, from post to post.

"I beg your pardon, sir," he gasped, finally steadying himself on wide spread legs. "There is a wireless for Mr. Totten, sir, but when I took it to 'im he said to fetch it to you, being unable to hold up 'is head."

Robin read it through, and at the end whistled softly.

"Take it to Mr. Totten, Hobbs, and see if it will not serve to make him hold up his head a little."

"Very good, sir. I hope it will. Wouldn't it be wise for me to announce who it is from, sir, to sort of prepare him for it?"

"He knows who it is from, Hobbs, so you needn't worry. It is from home, if it will interest you, Hobbs."

"Thank you, sir; it does interest me. I thought it might be from Mr. Blithers."

Robin's scowl sent him scuttling away a great deal more rigidly than when he came.

"Idiot!" muttered the young man, still scowling.

There was silence between the two for a few seconds. Then she spoke disinterestedly:

"Is it from the Mr. Blithers who has the millions and the daughter who wants to marry a prince?"

"Merely a business transaction, Miss Guile," he said absently. He was thinking of Romano's message.

"So it would appear."

"I beg pardon? I was—er—thinking—"

"It was of no consequence, Mr. Schmidt," she said airily.

He picked up the thread once more. "As a matter of fact, I've heard it said that Miss Blithers refused to marry the prince."

"Is it possible?" with fine irony.

"Is he such a dreadful person as all that?"

"I'm sure I don't know," murmured Robin uncomfortably. "He may be no more dreadful than she."

"Well, I hope she doesn't marry him," said Miss Guile.

"So do I," said R. Schmidt, and their eyes met. After a moment she looked away, her first surrender to the mysterious something that lay deep in his.

Suddenly, and without reason, she appeared to be bored. As a matter of fact, she hid an incipient yawn behind her small gloved hand.

"I think I shall go to my room. Will you kindly unwrap me, Mr. Schmidt?"

He promptly obeyed, and then assisted her to her feet, steadying her against the roll of the vessel.

"I shall pray for continuous rough weather," he announced, with as gallant a bow as could be made under the circumstances.

"Thank you," she said, and he was pleased to take it that she was not thanking him for a physical service.

A few minutes later he was in his own room, and she was in hers, and

for a soldier to hear. It really was quite appalling.

"He's better now," said Hobbs, more respectfully than was his wont. It was evident that he had sustained quite a shock.

"Well, what do you think of it?" demanded the prince, pointing to the message.

"Of all the confounded impudence!" began the count healthily, and then uttered a mighty groan of impotence. It was clear that he could not do justice to the occasion.

Robin picked up the Marconigram and calmly smoothed out the crinkles. Then he read it aloud, very slowly and with extreme disgust in his fine young face. It was a lengthy communication from Baron Romano, the prime minister in Edelweis:

Preliminary agreement signed before hearing Blithers had bought London, Paris, Berlin. He cables his immediate visit to G. Object now appears clear. All newspapers in Europe print dispatches from America that marriage is practically arranged between R. and M. Interviews with Blithers corroborate reported engagement. Europe is amused. Editorials sarcastic. Prices of our securities advance two points on confirmation of report. We are bewildered. Also vague rumor they have eloped, but denied by R. Daxbergers silent. What does it all mean? Wire truth to me. People are uneasy. Gourou will meet you in Paris.

In the adjoining suit Miss Guile was shaking Mrs. Gaston out of a long courted and much needed sleep. The poor lady sat up and blinked feebly at the excited, starry eyed girl.

"Wake up!" cried Bedella impatiently. "What do you think? I have a perfectly wonderful suspicion—perfectly wonderful!"

"How can you be so unfeeling?" moaned the limp lady.

"This R. Schmidt is Prince Robin of Graustark!" cried the girl excitedly. "I am sure of it—just as sure as can be."

Mrs. Gaston's eyes were popping, not with amazement, but alarm.

"Do lie down, child," she whimpered. "Marie! The sleeping powders at once! Do!"

"Oh, I'm not mad," cried the girl. "Now listen to me, and I'll tell you why I believe—yes, actually believe him to be the—"

"Marie do you hear me?"

Miss Guile shook her vigorously. "Wake up! It isn't a nightmare. Now listen!"

To be Continued



"I shall pray for continuous rough weather."

the promenade deck was as barren as the desert of Sahara.

He found Count Quinn stretched out upon his bed, attended not only by Hobbs, but also the reanimated Dank. The crumpled message lay on the floor.

"I'm glad you waited awhile," said the young lieutenant, getting up from the trunk on which he had been sitting. "If you had come any sooner you would have heard words at only

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Mrs. Joe Walker and daughter, Miss Delpha, of Kingswood, were the guests of Mr. and Mrs. J. W. Davis Wednesday night.

Edd Glascock and family left Wednesday for Bowling Green, where they will make their future home.

Mrs. Jack Dyer and baby are the guests of her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Abe Bruner, at Garfield last week.

Mr. and Mrs. Clint Tucker were the guests of Mr. and Mrs. J. W. Blair. Mr. and Mrs. Everett Carman, of Mook, were the guests of his aunt, Mrs. Daisy Butler, Wednesday night.

Our merchant, R. Davis, has purchased a gasoline mill and placed it near his store ready to do grinding for the people.

Spring.

Spring is looked upon by many as the most delightful season of the year, but this cannot be said of the rheumatic. The cold and damp weather brings on rheumatic pains which are anything but pleasant. They can be relieved, however, by applying Chamberlain's Liniment. Obtainable everywhere.

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